

EPA's Mission, Goals, and Principles

This section defines the EPA goals and guiding principles that have been developed for EPA's planning, budgeting, analysis and accountability process.

EPA's Mission, Goals, and Principles

The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment—air, water, and land—upon which life depends.

EPA's purpose is to ensure that:

- All Americans are protected from significant risks to human health and the environment where they live, learn and work.
- National efforts to reduce environmental risk are based on the best available scientific information.
- Federal laws protecting human health and the environment are enforced fairly and effectively.
- Environmental protection is an integral consideration in U.S. policies concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy.
- All parts of society—communities, individuals, business, state and local governments, tribal governments—have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks.
- Environmental protection contributes to making our communities and ecosystems diverse, sustainable and economically productive.
- The United States plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment.

EPA's mission reflects the will of the American people as expressed through Congress and six successive Presidents. To remain focused on these mandates and to establish guideposts for its employees today and in the future, EPA has defined a series of ten strategic, long-term goals. These goals, together with the underlying principles that will be used to achieve them, will define EPA's planning, budgeting, analysis, and accountability process. In the next chapter, each goal is described in detail.

EPA's Goals

1. Clean Air:

The air in every American community will be safe and healthy to breathe. In particular, children, the elderly, and people with respiratory ailments will be

protected from health risks of breathing polluted air. Reducing air pollution will also protect the environment, resulting in many benefits, such as restoring life in damaged ecosystems and reducing health risks to those whose subsistence depends directly on those ecosystems.

2. Clean and Safe Water:

All Americans will have drinking water that is clean and safe to drink. Effective protection of America's rivers, lakes, wetlands, aquifers, and coastal and ocean waters will sustain fish, plants, and wildlife, as well as recreational, subsistence, and economic activities. Watersheds and their aquatic ecosystems will be restored and protected to improve public health, enhance water quality, reduce flooding, and provide habitat for wildlife.

3. Safe Food:

The foods Americans eat will be free from unsafe pesticide residues. Children especially will be protected from the health threats posed by pesticide residues, because they are among the most vulnerable groups in our society.

4. Preventing Pollution and Reducing Risk in Communities, Homes, Workplaces and Ecosystems:

Pollution prevention and risk management strategies aimed at cost-effectively eliminating, reducing, or minimizing emissions and contamination will result in cleaner and safer environments in which all Americans can reside, work and enjoy life. EPA will safeguard ecosystems and promote the health of natural communities that are integral to the quality of life in this nation.

5. Better Waste Management, Restoration of Contaminated Waste Sites, and Emergency Response:

America's wastes will be stored, treated, and disposed of in ways that prevent harm to people and to the natural environment. EPA will work to clean up previously polluted sites, restoring them to uses appropriate for surrounding communities, and respond to and prevent waste-related or industrial accidents.

6. Reduction of Global and Cross-Border Environmental Risks:

The United States will lead other nations in successful, multilateral efforts to reduce significant risks to human health and ecosystems from climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, and other hazards of international concern.

7. Expansion of Americans' Right to Know About Their Environment:

Easy access to a wealth of information about the state of their local environment will expand citizen involvement and give people tools to protect their families and their communities as they see fit. Increased information exchange between scientists, public health officials, businesses, citizens, and all levels of government will foster greater knowledge about the environment and what can be done to protect it.

8. Sound Science, Improved Understanding of Environmental Risk, and Greater Innovation to Address Environmental Problems:

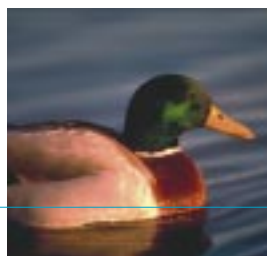
EPA will develop and apply the best available science for addressing current and future environmental hazards, as well as new approaches toward improving environmental protection.

9. A Credible Deterrent to Pollution and Greater Compliance with the Law:

EPA will ensure full compliance with laws intended to protect human health and the environment.

10. Effective Management:

EPA will establish a management infrastructure that will set and implement the highest quality standards for effective internal management and fiscal responsibility.



How Program Evaluations Contributed to the Establishment of the Agency's Goals

EPA's goals reflect public priorities as articulated by Congress in the form of statutory mandates and authorities for achieving clean air, clean water, waste management and other important national concerns. As such, several Agency goals encompass our activities in support of media-specific achievements under the range of legislation we are charged to implement.

Over the course of the past five years, the Agency also engaged in an intensive effort to develop a set of national environmental goals defined in a draft "Environmental Goals for America" report. This draft report reflected extensive public input and was used as the basis for many of the goals in the Strategic Plan. Evaluative steps EPA took in developing these goals include:

- Examining trends affecting health and ecological risks;
- Assessing the effectiveness of current and foreseeable environmental technologies and programs;

- Conducting research into available information on costs and benefits;
- Conducting scientific analysis to support setting health standards and assessing the likelihood of meeting them; and
- Evaluating stakeholder priorities by consulting with other federal agencies, state/tribal/local governments, and industry and citizen organizations.

In establishing goals for the Agency's Strategic Plan, we evaluated a similar range of stakeholder input on EPA priority areas as a subset of the wider range of human health and environmental protection activities across the federal government.

Other needed achievements in multi-media, cross-program areas and in Agency management processes are outlined in goals that address priorities identified in major evaluations of Agency work. These include studies by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA); the National Performance Review (NPR); internal reviews conducted in compliance with the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act; and ongoing program evaluations and management reviews. For example:



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- Two goals track directly to recommendations of the NPR: Preventing Pollution and Reducing Risk, and Sound Science.
- The NAPA recommendation (from “Setting Priorities, Getting Results” [1995]) that we increase regulatory flexibility in exchange for enhanced performance is reflected in our goal for enforcement, as well as our guiding principles for pollution prevention and common sense, cost-effective solutions to environmental problems.
- Our goals and objectives place appropriate emphasis on high-visibility, high-investment programs that are subject to statutory and other regular reviews by OIG and GAO, such as the Superfund program and resource management activities in general.

These are the goals we have set as we begin the process of strategic planning. Future program evaluations will influence decision making in this area and can help us to sharpen the focus of our goals and objectives.

EPA's Guiding Principles:

In addition to developing a set of goals, the Agency has developed a set of principles intended to guide senior management in making decisions about Agency priorities as well as provide a framework for ways in which the goals and objectives may best be reached in our day-to-day activities.

Reduce Health and Environmental Risks:

We will protect human health and the environment by employing cost-effective risk reduction strategies, based on sound, peer-reviewed science, in our implementation of programs. In making decisions about Agency priorities, we will balance our efforts to reduce ecological risks with our efforts to reduce risks to human health.

Emphasize Pollution Prevention:

We will structure our approaches to create incentives for preventing pollution and the transfer of pollution among air, water, and land. To accomplish this, the Agency will use a mix of tools--including performance standards and economic incentives in setting national pollution controls, as well as voluntary pollution reductions and other innovative alternatives--in furtherance of EPA's goals and objectives.



Emphasize Children's Health:

We will ensure that all standards EPA sets address children's unique vulnerability to health and environmental threats, and we will place emphasis on identifying and assessing environmental health risks that may affect children disproportionately.

Strengthen Partnerships:

We will enhance EPA's partnerships with federal, tribal, state, and local agencies, Congress, private industry, public interest groups, and citizens in order to identify environmental goals and work together to achieve them. Our internal partnership with EPA employee labor organizations will also be critical to our success.

*EPA's Mission,
Goals, and
Principles***Maximize Public Participation and
Community Right to Know:**

We will increase the flow of information to the public, enhancing every American's right to know about local environmental hazards and general conditions, and thereby enable people to make informed environmental decisions and participate in setting local and national priorities.

**Emphasize Comprehensive Regional and
Community-Based Solutions:**

We will structure our approaches to address all forms of pollution simultaneously--in the air, land and water--and do so in a way that confronts environmental problems on a community-wide or regional basis.

Place Emphasis on Indian Country:

We will work with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis to ensure the protection of the environment and human health in Indian Country, consistent with our trust relationship with tribes and our interest in conservation of cultural uses of natural resources.

**Choose Common Sense, Cost-Effective
Solutions:**

Because a safer, healthier environment goes hand-in-hand with a robust economy, we will fulfill EPA's goals using common sense approaches that consider benefits and costs and seek the most cost-effective ways to integrate our efforts with those aimed at economic growth. We will work to increase environmental stewardship and accountability and get better environmental protection at reasonable cost by incorporating successful innovations into the daily operation of environmental programs.

